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A Tribute to Jose Hipolito Unanue

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"The greatest gifts of divine generosity," says Gracian, "are a fertile mind, a deep understanding and a cultivated taste." Looking back through the long perspective of the years, the late XVIII century glows with a magic light. In that hyaline clarity of the classic arcades we see Unanue communing with Franklin and Jefferson, with Bentham and Hume, Montesquieu and Voltaire and all the other encyclopedic minds of the age, one with them in quality and ability.

Charles III, best and most enlightened of the Spanish Bourbons, ruled in Spain when Unanue was young, and some of the pale golden age of his court reflected itself in Peru where Cosme Bueno and Gabriel Moreno tutored the youth who was predestined to tower above them.

José Hipólito Unanue has been called the father of his country and creator of the Peruvian spirit. He has with equal truth been called the father of South American medicine. In protest to the ancient methods of teaching anatomy—a mass

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of superstition—he founded the modern anatomical amphitheater to teach from the human body. He also evolved the plan of a medical school as distinct from the chair of medicine in the university.

Unanue had the true scientific fervor that was intolerant of charlatans and quacks. His condemnation of them extended to barber surgeons and the deplorable type of women who practised as midwives. Yet he had genuine esteem for the native healers who through trial and error over the centuries, had discovered useful medicines.

All the terrible diseases of his time came to Unanue's study. Syphilis and small-pox and measles, verruga and malaria and tabardillo were likely to rage in epidemic fury. Only two, malaria and small-pox, were susceptible of control in his day, but his studies provided the background for later public health measures.

Medicine, however, was only one facet of his polyform activities. Unanue was a statesman, scientist, educator and journalist. Classic scholar, cosmographer, archeologist, sociologist, his fine library was the meeting place of all other scientific minds. His stupendous work "Clima de Lima" is still unexcelled, and a periodical Mercurio Peruano was the object of his journalistic enterprise.

A notable orator, Unanue also wrote with a stately eloquence. Of his non-medical themes coca, quina, tobacco, agriculture and irrigation, and minerals in Peru are significantly progressive.

Keenly alert to political symptoms in America, his inherent patriotism drew him from his home and family to go as a physician with San Martín when the Argentino crossed the Andes on his march of liberation.

Bolívar and San Martín, and later O'Higgins, are the soldier patriots better known to North America; but without Unanue's prestige, his influence in Lima and his leadership, the military successes of the generals would have been long delayed. Unanue was the link between north and south throughout the struggle, because he thought in terms of America. When the old viceroyalties and kingdoms were broken up in the fight for independence, it was he who saw the im-

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portance of a unified continent in place of small rival states, and influenced the Council of the Generals thereto.

The new political organization of Peru was the work of Unanue, who was named Chief of his State by unanimous vote. Then when his country was well launched as a nation, he retired once more to his estate near Lima to enjoy his library and direct his farms.

In himself this greatest of Peruvians personified the balance necessary for civil progress: a background of classical study and the humanities, emphasis on maintenance of health, and a serene confidence in the destiny of his native land.